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Report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000, provides an update on the peace process since my report dated 30 August 2005 (S/2005/553) and describes the activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the current mandate of which expires on 15 March 2006. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005) of 23 November 2005, it also reports on compliance by Ethiopia and Eritrea with the demands in paragraphs 1 and 2 of that resolution.

II. Status of the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas and cooperation with the parties

2. Since my last report to the Security Council, there has been a serious deterioration of the security and political situation in the UNMEE Mission area, in particular in and around the Temporary Security Zone, which has become increasingly tense and potentially volatile. This situation is a result of an accumulation of unresolved issues, in particular the stalemate in the demarcation process caused by Ethiopia's refusal to fully accept, without preconditions, the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission of 13 April 2002; the forward deployment of Ethiopian troops since December 2004; violations of the Temporary Security Zone; and the increasing restrictions imposed on UNMEE by the Eritrean authorities, including a ban on all helicopter flights by UNMEE within Eritrean airspace. This action by the Government of Eritrea has severely reduced the Mission's capacity to implement its monitoring mandate as requested by the parties in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed at Algiers on 18 June 2000 and authorized by the Security Council in its resolutions 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000 and 1320 (2000).

3. In my letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 24 October 2005 (S/2005/668), I indicated that the Eritrean ban on UNMEE helicopter flights had seriously affected the security of UNMEE personnel and all operations of the Mission. UNMEE estimates that as a result of this ban, and other restrictions on United Nations ground patrols imposed by Eritrea, both outside and inside the Temporary Security Zone, the Mission has been able to monitor only 40

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per cent of the territory within its area of responsibility. In addition, 18 out of 40 UNMEE observation posts and deployment sites, primarily located in isolated areas, have had to be vacated because of the difficulty in maintaining them. The restrictions have also seriously reduced the Mission's ability to provide timely warning in case of a military build-up or infiltration of troops into or around the Temporary Security Zone by either side, despite all efforts to step up the UNMEE mobile patrols and increase the number of static checkpoints. Finally, and most importantly, without the capacity to undertake medical evacuation by air, the safety of peacekeepers was put at serious risk. Asmara also prohibited UNMEE night patrols and the use by UNMEE of track roads, and the movement of United Nations troops is routinely not allowed to proceed in many areas of the Zone. Despite my personal appeals and the demands by the Security Council, these unacceptable restrictions, which were introduced without any forewarning or explanation, remain in place.

4. Following the Eritrean ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, the Ethiopian Armed Forces increased its troop levels in areas close to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone, which further heightened tension in the border areas. Ethiopia has also recalled reservists and ex-soldiers to active duty. Addis Ababa has maintained that the forward deployment of its troops was intended exclusively as a preventive measure against any possible "miscalculation" by Eritrea, which might result in the resumption of large-scale hostilities. In their movement to forward positions, on 18 November, the Ethiopian Armed Forces took up position at Peak 885, a site inside the Zone in sub-sector East that had been vacated by UNMEE the day before. Following formal protests lodged by UNMEE, the Ethiopian Armed Forces withdrew from this location on 23 November. Similarly, on 29 November, a few elements in the Ethiopian Armed Forces briefly entered the Zone in the area of Adi Melele, in Sector West. Until the adoption of resolution 1640 (2005), the Ethiopian Armed Forces had continued to actively reinforce and conduct military training and defensive preparations in areas adjacent to the southern boundary of the Zone. The Eritrean Defence Forces have undertaken considerable movement of troops in areas adjacent to the northern boundary of the Zone.

5. In view of the heightened tensions, Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan, Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Peacekeeping Operations, visited the region on behalf of the Council. Ambassador Oshima conveyed the Council's support to UNMEE staff and for the Mission as a whole and expressed concern about the current situation to the parties. I am grateful to him for agreeing to undertake this important mission.

6. On 23 November 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1640 (2005), by which it placed several important demands on the parties and requested the United Nations to monitor their compliance with the demands contained in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the resolution.

7. On 9 December 2005, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, sent me a letter, stating that the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone had been violated, thus creating a dangerous situation. The Government of Ethiopia nevertheless expressed its willingness to redeploy its forces "consistent with the instruction of paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005)" notwithstanding the possibility that in so doing Ethiopia's security could be put at risk.

8. On 6 December 2005, the Government of Eritrea sent a letter to UNMEE requesting that its personnel "with nationalities from the United States of America, Canada and Europe, including the Russian Federation" leave the country within 10 days. As was the case with the helicopter ban, Eritrea gave no reason for this decision.

9. I am grateful to the Security Council for strongly condemning these unacceptable actions and restrictions imposed on UNMEE by Eritrea in its presidential statement of 14 December (S/PRST/2005/62). The statement further indicated the Council's agreement to temporarily redeploy certain UNMEE staff from Eritrea to Ethiopia and its intention to promptly review all options for UNMEE's deployment and functions. The Council stressed that it was making this decision only in the interest of the safety and security of UNMEE staff.

10. On 7 December, I issued a similar statement condemning the decision of Eritrea to request the withdrawal of some United Nations staff from the country and once again appealing to Asmara to reverse all restrictions imposed on UNMEE's operations. Eritrea's demand contravenes its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to respect the exclusively international character of United Nations staff, which is a fundamental principle of United Nations peacekeeping.

11. At my request, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, accompanied by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations military adviser, Lieutenant-General Randhir Kumar Mehta, visited the region to meet with the parties, the diplomatic community and UNMEE personnel at all levels in order to discuss the present situation and assess how to move the overall peace process forward. Although Mr. Guéhenno was able to meet with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, no senior Eritrean Government official agreed to receive him, nor did the Eritrean authorities respond to the two letters sent by Mr. Guéhenno, reminding the Government of Eritrea of its obligations and urging it to reconsider its damaging decision to request the withdrawal of certain UNMEE staff as well as the other unacceptable restrictions it had imposed. The Government of Eritrea did not respond to my own calls to rescind the decision.

12. In accordance with the agreement of the Security Council, on 15 and 16 December UNMEE temporarily redeployed 77 UNMEE civilian staff and 61 military personnel from Eritrea to Ethiopia. Those redeployed included both staff of the nationalities listed in the Eritrean letter of 6 December as well as staff of other nationalities who could no longer effectively perform their functions in Asmara because of the overall restrictions Eritrea had imposed on the Mission.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005)

13. During the meeting of the Military Coordination Commission, held on 25 November in Nairobi, UNMEE discussed with the parties the demands contained in Security Council resolution 1640 (2005), in particular, those related to the lifting of all restrictions imposed on the Mission's operations and the need to show maximum restraint and to return to the pre-16 December 2004 levels of deployment within 30 days. UNMEE also drew the attention of the parties to other demands contained in this important resolution. While the Ethiopian delegation agreed to carry out the redeployment of troops, the Eritrean delegation argued that the provision concerning the redeployment did not apply to Eritrea, as it had not moved

any troops forward. The Eritrean authorities maintained that any additional armed personnel in the Temporary Security Zone were militia engaged in agricultural activities. Both sides reiterated their earlier positions on the causes of the stalemate in the peace process and its implications and reaffirmed their commitment to the non-resumption of hostilities.

Ethiopia

14. On 27 November 2005, the Ethiopian authorities presented to UNMEE a plan for the redeployment of their forces to the pre-16 December 2004 levels of deployment. UNMEE verified the Ethiopian plan against its own records and developed a detailed monitoring and verification programme.

15. Pursuant to the monitoring and verification programme, UNMEE teams obtained details of the deployment of the Ethiopian troops that were expected to be pulled back and ascertained both their presence at the forward positions and the schedules for their redeployment. UNMEE patrols then confirmed the departure of the Ethiopian military personnel and equipment from these forward positions and, where possible, their arrival at the designated pre-16 December 2004 locations. Finally, the Mission's teams verified each of the vacated locations to reconfirm that they had not been reoccupied by Ethiopia. Throughout this exercise UNMEE military observers maintained close coordination with the Ethiopian authorities. On 23 December, UNMEE confirmed that Ethiopia had completed the planned withdrawal of eight of its divisions from the forward positions.

16. As required by resolution 1640 (2005), the force levels of the Ethiopian Armed Forces that remained close to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone and in the adjacent areas generally conform to those that prevailed previous to 16 December 2004. Most of the Ethiopian forces presently deployed in the border area appear to have a defensive posture. To acquire any large-scale offensive capability, Ethiopia would need to bring forces back much closer to the southern boundary of the Zone.

17. On 23 December, I received a copy of a note from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, addressed to the President of the Security Council with regard to, inter alia, the implementation by Ethiopia of resolution 1640 (2005), stating that Ethiopia had responded "receptively" to the resolution, agreeing to reposition its troops away from the border. The note further stated that Ethiopia would continue to refrain from initiating any armed hostilities and would work to resolve its differences with Eritrea peacefully, although "the range of possibilities open to Ethiopia" was "limited" until Eritrea demonstrated a willingness to resolve disputes through peaceful means, including normal diplomatic dialogue.

Eritrea

18. As indicated above, despite various appeals, the Government of Eritrea has not reversed its ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, as demanded by resolution 1640 (2005), as well as additional restrictions imposed on the operations of UNMEE and has not provided the Mission with the access, support and protection required for the performance of its duties. The imposition of the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMEE personnel has continued without any sign of abating. Moreover, since the adoption of the resolution, Eritrea has put in place additional restrictions, in particular inside the Temporary Security Zone. Every day, UNMEE

faces at least 10 to 12 instances of restrictions on its freedom of movement, including denials of access to areas of Eritrean deployment inside the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas. In large areas in Sector West and Sector Centre, UNMEE ground patrols have been restricted to the main roads and are not allowed to move at night. In addition, the patrols have been prevented from monitoring certain areas. Challenge inspections by the Mission continue to be blocked by the Eritrean militia at a number of locations. Finally, the closure of the main road from Asmara to Barentu, via Keren, which is the most viable supply route to UNMEE troops in Sector West, is a major impediment to the operations of the Mission, particularly in the light of the existing ban on helicopter flights.

19. As noted above, the Eritrean authorities have indicated that, in their view, the demand for the redeployment of the troops to 16 December 2004 deployment levels does not apply to them. While UNMEE's observation capacity is impaired by the restrictions imposed by Eritrea on its freedom of movement, the Mission has reported that the Government of Eritrea has taken no visible steps that would indicate a redeployment in compliance with resolution 1640 (2005).

20. In this context, UNMEE has also observed vacant military locations in the areas adjacent to the Temporary Security Zone from which troops have presumably moved to a destination yet undetermined by the Mission. At the same time, UNMEE reports armed Eritrean personnel in numbers ranging from 80 to 150 per location at a total of 15 to 17 locations inside the Zone. Some of these personnel claim to be militia, although they refuse to present their identity cards, raising suspicion that at least some of them could be regular Eritrean troops. In the meantime, the Government of Eritrea insists that it has not deployed soldiers inside the Zone, that there are only some additional militia, who are carrying out agricultural activities. While the Mission's monitoring capacity has been limited, there is no evidence of the presence of tanks or artillery or any large-scale troop concentrations inside the Zone.

IV. Status of the Mission and related issues

21. As of 26 December 2005, the total strength of the UNMEE military component stood at 3,332, comprising 3,048 troops, 83 headquarters staff and 201 military observers (see annex II).

22. Despite various restrictions and other difficulties, the Mission continues, to the extent possible, to carry out its major monitoring and verification functions by launching an average of over 100 patrols per day, in addition to maintaining dozens of stationary checkpoints. The Mission actively liaises with the parties, including the military authorities on the ground, and interacts with military authorities in the capitals. It should be mentioned that UNMEE access to high-level authorities in Asmara remains very limited.

23. I regret to report that no progress has been made on the issue of the direct flight route between Asmara and Addis Ababa. I once again appeal to the Government of Eritrea to address this important issue as a matter of urgency.

V. Boundary Commission

24. As indicated in my previous report, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission has suspended its activities in the area (see annex I). Accordingly, there has been no further demarcation activity.

VI. Options for the future deployment of the Mission

25. In its presidential statement adopted on 14 December (S/PRST/2005/62), the Security Council emphasized its intention to review promptly all options for UNMEE's deployment and functions in the context of its original purpose, its capacity to act effectively and the different military options available. In my view, the following principles should be considered as fundamental to any decision regarding the future of UNMEE:

(a) Full compliance with the Algiers Agreements and the decision of the Boundary Commission, as cornerstones for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as resumption of dialogue between the parties;

(b) Consent and full cooperation of the parties with UNMEE, including unrestricted freedom of movement, allowing the Mission to perform its functions without any hindrance;

(c) Respect for the exclusively international nature of the Mission, which is a fundamental principle of United Nations peacekeeping;

(d) Separation of forces of both parties, thereby creating a conducive environment for the continuation of the peace process;

(e) Prevention of any escalation of conflict;

(f) Readiness of troop-contributing countries to participate in the Mission and guarantees for the safety and security of all their personnel;

(g) Maintenance of effective, high-level communication channels between the parties themselves and between UNMEE and the parties.

26. With these principles in mind, I propose, for the consideration of the Security Council, the following options for the immediate future of UNMEE, some of which may require a new mandate. Each has its positive and negative aspects and some do not respect the principles enunciated fully. They will have to be compared and assessed.

27. The first option would be to maintain the present UNMEE configuration on the ground. This would allow the Mission to continue its current presence and to perform its mandated tasks to the extent possible, under the current restrictions. The present configuration may be the best option for continuing, as much as feasible, the separation of forces as UNMEE would retain its presence inside the Temporary Security Zone, albeit with a much degraded monitoring capacity. Though reduced, this presence could buy time for diplomatic initiatives to unblock the current dangerous stalemate. However, to maintain the status quo with regard to many restrictions that have accumulated over the years would be to acquiesce to Eritrea's unacceptable demands, including for the removal of certain United Nations staff. To do so may set an undesirable precedent and could lead to more unjustifiable

restrictions. In the light of the existing helicopter ban, this option also poses serious safety concerns for UNMEE personnel.

28. Under the second option, UNMEE's configuration would be adjusted further by relocating the entire UNMEE headquarters and units integral to it from Asmara to Addis Ababa, leaving only a small liaison office in the Eritrean capital. Some of the military units currently stationed in Asmara, including the guard and administrative company, the force reserve company, level II hospital and the military helicopter unit, would be relocated to the adjacent areas, south of the current Temporary Security Zone. However, the United Nations troops currently stationed in the Zone would remain in place, subject obviously to Eritrea's cooperation. This option would drastically reduce the Mission's presence in Asmara and would thus minimize the impact of various arbitrary restrictions imposed by the Government of Eritrea over the years. At the same time, this option would leave the Mission objectives essentially intact and better positioned to fulfil its mandate than at present. However, the option does present serious logistical challenges and UNMEE may still be subject to further Eritrean restrictions, especially in the Zone.

29. The third option would involve UNMEE's transformation into an observer mission, either on both sides of the Temporary Security Zone or exclusively on the Ethiopian side. Such an observer mission would uphold the principle of the Zone but would have limited monitoring and conflict prevention capabilities. Deploying observers exclusively on the Ethiopian side would still provide some means for conflict prevention, while ensuring relative safety and security for United Nations personnel, subject to Ethiopia's cooperation. Addis Ababa would have to agree to the implementation of any option located exclusively on its side. Moreover, if located only on the Ethiopian side of the Zone, UNMEE might need a new mandate and would not be able to monitor the military situation on the Eritrean side of the Zone, nor would there be any guarantee that the integrity of the Zone would hold.

30. Under the fourth option, a preventive force would be deployed in strength entirely south of the Temporary Security Zone currently held by Ethiopia. The deployment of such a force could assist in the prevention of hostilities through its presence and would ensure the safety of United Nations personnel. However, just as with the option with an observer mission on one side, the proposed preventive force could not guarantee the integrity of the Zone. In addition, this option would ensure separation of military forces only if Ethiopia were to permanently withdraw its forces from forward positions; otherwise the risk of a resumption of hostilities would remain high.

31. In the fifth option, UNMEE could be downgraded to a liaison mission maintaining a small office in each capital, while pursuing efforts towards a political solution, in accordance with the Algiers Agreement and the decision of the Boundary Commission. Accordingly, a limited number of political, military and other liaison officers would remain in Asmara and Addis Ababa, headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. If allowed by the parties, UNMEE would also maintain forward liaison presence, for example in Barentu, on the Eritrean side, and in Adigrat, in Ethiopia. The possible risk of violations of the Temporary Security Zone would remain high and could lead to serious consequences. As in any option involving United Nations deployment in Eritrea, even a small mission could face severe operational restrictions.

32. Finally, UNMEE could be withdrawn entirely. It should be recalled that the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000 stipulates that the "parties shall permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves" and that each party "shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the other". As agreed by the parties, the United Nations could assist them by providing political support to the peace process from outside the region.

33. None of these options is perfect. Any decision made by the Security Council would need to take into account the objective reality on the ground, the attitude of the parties and the level of the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Algiers Agreements. In this regard, the Council may wish to consider whether UNMEE's current situation has reached the point at which one party is, at least partially, withdrawing its cooperation with the Mission. If it is indeed so, the choices may be limited to those where at least minimum cooperation on the ground can be assured and where the future United Nations presence could help disengage troops, prevent a resumption of hostilities and create the much needed space for the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement and dialogue between the parties.

VII. Mine action

34. The Mission suspended all demining activities on 5 October 2005, following Eritrea's ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, which are critical for casualty evacuation procedures for any deminers. However, following the implementation of alternative casualty evacuation (casevac) procedures, sound demining operations recommenced in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas on 14 November 2005.

35. Consistent with the Mission's mandate, from September to the end of December 2005, the UNMEE demining units, working together with the commercial contractors on route clearance and other demining operations, destroyed 110 pieces of unexploded ordnance, in addition to clearing 130,477 square metres of land and 70 kilometres of road. There were two incidents involving newly laid anti-tank mines that struck vehicles inside the Temporary Security Zone and an adjacent area on the Ethiopian side. Both incidents occurred in Sector West, killing a total of five persons and injuring 22, most of them seriously. The UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre continues to closely monitor the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance in all Sectors.

36. The Kenyan military demining element also continued to train and work with commercial contractors to implement an integrated approach to mine clearing operations inside the Temporary Security Zone. In accordance with the developed priorities, the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre focused its community-based outreach activities on internally displaced persons returning to the Shilalo region in Sector West and on newly resettled internally displaced persons near Tsorena in Sector Centre, providing mine risk education to over 5,000 people.

VIII. Human rights

37. During the reporting period, UNMEE continued to monitor cross-border human rights-related incidents, including alleged abductions and cases of missing persons from Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as cattle-rustling.

38. In particular, UNMEE monitored the repatriation, conducted under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, of a total number of 520 persons of Ethiopian origin from Eritrea and 15 persons of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia. Reports indicate that persons of Ethiopian origin continue to face discriminatory practices in Eritrea, including the demand for payment of high "repatriation clearance fees". At the same time, cases of temporary detentions in Ethiopia of persons of Eritrean origin pending their repatriation are also reported. I would like to reiterate my strong appeal to both parties to ensure that the repatriations remain voluntary and that they are carried out in a proper and dignified manner.

39. Approximately 113,000 internally displaced persons currently live in the border areas of Eritrea in either makeshift settlement camps or with host communities. These persons face a dire need of food, water, health care, shelter, education and other basic amenities. I call on both Governments and the international community to assist the return of these persons to their places of origin. I also appeal to the Government of Eritrea to facilitate the work of the international relief agencies in the Mission area, which thus far has been restricted by Asmara. Simultaneously, UNMEE continues to monitor conditions in the Shimelba refugee camp in northern Ethiopia. As of late December 2005, some 10,000 persons were residing in the camp, which was receiving a decreased monthly inflow of new refugees. The Ethiopian authorities have suggested establishing a new camp, since the existing capacity of the Shimelba refugee camp has been reached.

IX. Public information

40. UNMEE public information activities continued through the broadcast of radio programmes, the conduct of weekly press briefings, video productions, the issuance of monthly newsletters and the work of outreach centres.

41. Over the last few months, UNMEE completed an audience survey on the effectiveness of the UNMEE radio programme in Eritrea. The outcome of the survey indicated that slightly more than half the population (52.4 per cent) in the country listen regularly to the weekly United Nations programme. In Ethiopia, the Mission is currently reviewing the efficiency of using short-wave radio as a medium to reach people in the border areas.

42. In the meantime, visits to the UNMEE outreach centre in Addis Ababa declined sharply owing to the disturbances that took place in the Ethiopian capital and in other parts of the country in November 2005, although it received an upsurge in telephone calls as people sought information on the situation, particularly with regard to the possibility of resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In contrast, the outreach centres in Adigrat and Mekelle remain important sources of information for the local communities.

X. Humanitarian developments

43. In Eritrea, some 2 million people, many of whom already chronically undernourished, are facing varying degrees of food shortages with an estimated 1.3 million considered to be in need of food assistance. The Government's rejection of the Consolidated Appeal and the World Food Programme (WFP)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) food and crop assessment reflects its recent policy thrust of self-reliance and its shift towards more food-for-work programmes. In this connection, the Government has embarked on a very ambitious undertaking to assess food aid needs at the household level. The assessment is expected to identify those in need of direct relief assistance and those able to work for food as a means of promoting self-reliance through asset creation. In the meantime, the Government has suspended most general food distributions since September 2005 until it obtains a clear picture of these needs. Consequently, only 72,000 internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups are currently receiving general rations compared to some 1.3 million people in August 2005. Although the 2005 harvest prospects are expected to be favourable, there are concerns that it may not meet all the cereal requirements of the population. To respond to the Government's concerns, WFP is currently considering the gradual reorientation of its operations towards more labour-intensive and sustainable productive activities using food-for-work as a vehicle for food distribution.

44. The overall response to the 2005 United Nations Consolidated Appeal for Eritrea stands at 62.9 per cent of the required $156.4 million, with food being funded at 70 per cent and non-food items at 43 per cent of the requirements. The water, sanitation and health sectors of the country have made slow progress, despite the ongoing construction of water treatment plants/wells and successful vaccination campaigns. The provision of clean water, radical improvement in health services, hygiene and sanitation, extensive mine action and demobilization of thousands of soldiers are some of the issues that could bring about significant change in malnutrition rates and the overall humanitarian conditions in Eritrea.

45. In Ethiopia, a recent mid-season multi-agency food security assessment revealed that food security had improved in many parts of the country, with the exception of the northern zones of Afar and the lowlands of Oromiya regions. The total relief food requirements from September to December 2005 are estimated at 143,483 metric tons. About 200,000 tons of food are available for distribution, of which approximately 60,000 tons could cover food needs in the early months of 2006 when requirements in the pastoral areas may peak. As in Eritrea, the scaling down of military expenditures and a refocusing of economic priorities could significantly improve the humanitarian climate in Ethiopia.

46. The recovery programme operated by the United Nations country team, which aims at repatriating and reintegrating 6,000 internally displaced persons from the Hartisheik and Fafen camps to their places of origin in Somali Region, started in October 2005. Thus far, a total of 1,491 people have been moved.

47. UNMEE continued to implement quick-impact projects in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, from funds received through the Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in Ethiopia and Eritrea. I encourage donors to continue lending support to these important, small-scale projects by making additional contributions to the Trust Fund.

XI. Conduct of United Nations personnel

48. UNMEE conducted its first basic training module on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse from July to September 2005, during which a total of 588 United Nations civilian and military staff, in addition to contingent personnel referred to in the previous report, received training on the subject. Mandatory training in prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse has now been incorporated into the Mission's induction training for all civilian and military staff. HIV/AIDS, gender, human rights, code of conduct and cultural awareness have similarly been incorporated into the induction training.

XII. HIV/AIDS activities

49. The UNMEE HIV/AIDS unit continued with induction training and voluntary counselling and testing services for newly arrived personnel. It also conducted a training of the trainers course that is intended to increase its outreach activities among the local population. The course was designed primarily for uniformed personnel from contingents. Those individuals who have completed training are currently engaged in cascade training activities in their respective contingents. The unit carried out activities that include collaboration with community-based groups, which, after a needs assessment, led to the development of low cost community-based project proposals for HIV/AIDS prevention and collaboration with the United Nations country teams.

XIII. Observations

50. Despite the efforts of the international community, the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains a source of deep concern. As mentioned above, the latest considerable deterioration of the situation is a result of several factors: the protracted stalemate caused by Ethiopia's non-compliance with the implementation of the decision of the Boundary Commission; lack of any dialogue between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which is long overdue; the dangerous escalation of tensions, including forward movement of troops and heightened military activity in and around the Temporary Security Zone; and finally, the exacerbation of the situation caused by the restrictions imposed by Eritrea on UNMEE, including most recently, the helicopter ban and the arbitrary demand to remove UNMEE staff of certain nationalities.

51. While I welcome the redeployment by Ethiopia of its forces to the levels of 16 December 2004, I note with regret the non-compliance with operative paragraph 5 of resolution 1640 (2005) with regard to the acceptance of the decision of the Boundary Commission and the need to take immediate concrete steps to enable the Commission to demarcate the border. Full compliance with this paragraph is key to resolving the existing stalemate.

52. Eritrea's lack of cooperation with UNMEE and the arbitrary restrictions placed on it are particularly worrying since the Mission was established at the request of Ethiopia and Eritrea, pursuant to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 18 June 2000, which both parties entered into voluntarily. By that Agreement, the parties undertook to invite the United Nations to perform vital monitoring functions.

It is therefore paradoxical that, from the outset, the Eritrean authorities introduced numerous operational and administrative restrictions on the Mission, culminating in the situation created in October and November 2005, when UNMEE's effectiveness was deliberately and severely undermined. I would like, once again, to put on record that these restrictions are unacceptable and in contravention to the Charter of the United Nations and established peacekeeping practices. I decided to redeploy some of the UNMEE staff from Eritrea solely in the interest of the effectiveness of the Mission's operations as well as of the safety and security of personnel. Eritrea's actions give rise to the issue of the future of this important peacekeeping operation and, on a broader scale, the implementation of the Algiers Agreement. They also have major implications for the maintenance of peace and security in this region of Africa.

53. In my previous report, I noted that the existing stalemate regarding the implementation of the Algiers Agreements continues to be a major destabilizing factor in the peace process. I renew my appeal to the witnesses to the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000, especially those with influence on the parties, to assist the two countries urgently to resolve their differences. In this regard, I am exploring the possibility of convening a meeting of the witnesses to determine a way forward. The Security Council should also keep under consideration the possibility of a mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea, to be undertaken at an appropriate time.

54. It is clear that dialogue between the two parties should resume without any precondition and in good faith, as a necessary ingredient in bringing the peace process to a successful conclusion. The international community should do everything possible to bring the parties together to engage in a constructive exchange aimed at normalizing bilateral relations.

55. It is a matter of concern that the very existence of UNMEE has become, through pressure and restrictions, part of the current predicament. Short of a commitment and full cooperation of the parties, not only the future of the Mission, but the continuation of the peace process could be put into question. This is a critical moment and the concerted efforts of all involved are needed to avert a further deterioration of the situation. Tension remains high and any miscalculation by the parties could result in a rapid escalation of the situation, with unpredictable consequences.

56. Urgent de-escalation and full implementation of resolution 1640 (2005) is therefore required. I have noted the redeployment of the Ethiopian Armed Forces to the 16 December 2004 levels. In this regard, I deeply regret that the Eritrean authorities did not avail themselves of the extended presence in Asmara of Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno in order to unblock the situation and move the peace process forward.

57. As a result of the restrictions imposed on UNMEE, the present position of the Mission is becoming increasingly untenable. The time may be fast approaching to take difficult decisions on the future of the Mission. To this end, the Security Council may wish to consider the options outlined above.

58. As was mentioned earlier, none of the options is perfect. At a minimum, it is important that any option selected contribute to the prevention of the resumption of hostilities, while allowing the parties to conclude the implementation of the Algiers

Agreements. The Security Council may also wish to consider imposing deadlines for the implementation of the demands contained in its resolutions. With regard to the restrictions imposed on UNMEE, unless they are all lifted expeditiously, I will be obliged to make recommendations to the Council concerning force deployment on the ground by the end of January 2006.

59. I would like to take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their continued support to United Nations peacekeeping operations, often conducted in the most difficult circumstances, such as those currently prevailing at UNMEE. Members of the contingents currently serving with UNMEE deserve our deep appreciation for their perseverance and their continued professionalism with regard to the task at hand.

60. In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and to the UNMEE civilian and military personnel for their continued commitment and hard work, especially in this time of crisis. I was heartened to learn from Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, following his visit to the Mission, that despite the difficulties they face, the morale of staff and their willingness to contribute to UNMEE remains high. I would further like to thank all the Mission's partners, including the United Nations country teams and humanitarian agencies, the Member States involved, the African Union and other international organizations for the support they continue to lend to this important peace process.

Annex I

Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

Nineteenth report on the work of the Commission

1. This is the nineteenth report of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, covering the period from 1 September to 30 November 2005.

2. The Commission regrets to report that there has been no change in the situation since its previous report of 31 August 2005.

(*Signed*) Sir Elihu **Lauterpacht**
President of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

5 December 2005

Annex II

United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: military contributions as of 28 December 2005

Country	*Military Observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Algeria	1		1	2	
Austria	2		1	3	
Bangladesh	5	168	6	179	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9			9	
Bulgaria	5		2	7	
China	7			7	
Croatia	7			7	
Czech Republic	2			2	
Denmark	4			4	
Finland	7			7	
France			1	1	
Gambia	4		2	6	
Germany	2			2	
Ghana	9		4	13	
Greece	3			3	
Guatemala	3			3	
India	8	1 581	23	1 612	
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3			3	
Jordan	7	951	12	970	
Kenya	9	315	7	331	
Malaysia	4		3	7	
Namibia	4		3	7	
Nepal	5			5	
Nigeria	7		3	10	
Norway	5			5	
Paraguay	4			4	
Peru	4			4	
Poland	4			4	
Romania	7			7	
Russian Federation	6			6	
South Africa	5			5	
Spain	3		1	4	
Sweden	5			5	
Switzerland	3			3	
Tunisia	4		4	8	

Country	*Military Observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Ukraine	5			5	
United Republic of Tanzania	7		3	10	
United States of America	7			7	
Uruguay	5	33	3	41	
Zambia	10		4	14	
Total	**201**	**3 048**	**83**	**3 332**	**0**

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Seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1603 (2005) of 3 June 2005, by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of developments in Côte d'Ivoire and progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). The report covers developments since my report of 26 September 2005 (S/2005/604).

II. Political developments

2. National elections in Côte d'Ivoire could not take place on 30 October 2005, as envisaged under the country's constitution, because, as a result of massive delays and blockages in the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis and Pretoria Agreements, essential conditions were not in place. The efforts of national and international stakeholders to advance the peace process during the period under review therefore focused on seeking a major agreement on arrangements to prevent a political crisis at the end of the mandate of the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, on 30 October. In this regard, the Heads of State of the countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held an extraordinary meeting in Abuja on 30 September, at which they recommended to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union that new governance arrangements be put in place in Côte d'Ivoire at the end of President Gbagbo's mandate.

3. Based on the recommendation of ECOWAS, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union adopted a decision on 6 October 2005, setting out the post-30 October governance arrangements and measures to revitalize the stalled peace process. The decision, inter alia, stipulated that the arrangements agreed upon in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement should continue from 31 October 2005 for a period not exceeding 12 months, with President Laurent Gbagbo remaining in office as Head of State during this transition period. It further provided for the appointment of a new Prime Minister with full authority over the Council of Ministers.

4. It was also noted that additional measures were required to expedite the implementation of some provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis, Accra III and Pretoria Agreements, in particular the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process; the dismantling and disarmament of militias; the identification process; and

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the creation of conditions for holding free, fair and transparent elections. In this regard, the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union established an International Working Group at the ministerial level to assist the Government of Côte d'Ivoire in implementing the peace process. It also established a day-to-day Mediation Group, composed of my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, the High Representative for the elections, the Special Envoy of South Africa, the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in Côte d'Ivoire.

5. By its resolution 1633 (2005) of 21 October 2005, the Security Council endorsed the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The resolution also elaborated on the mechanisms for implementing that decision and affirmed that the International Working Group and the Mediation Group would both be co-chaired by my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Pierre Schori. The resolution also urged the Chairperson of the African Union, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, the Chairperson of ECOWAS, President Mamadou Tandja of Niger, and the African Union Mediator, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, to consult immediately with all the Ivorian parties in order to facilitate the appointment of a new Prime Minister. It stressed that the Prime Minister must have all the necessary powers and all the governmental financial, material and human resources to ensure the effective functioning of the Government and the implementation of the peace agreements.

6. The resolution also requested the International Working Group to draw up a road map for the implementation of all outstanding provisions of the peace agreements. It further noted that the mandate of the National Assembly would end on 16 December 2005, and requested the International Working Group to consult with all Ivorian parties on this issue.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005)

7. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005), my Special Representative held a series of meetings with the Ivorian parties to explain the legal and political implications of the resolution for all national and international stakeholders. The resolution had envisaged the appointment of a new Prime Minister by 31 October, however, due to unforeseen circumstances unrelated to the peace process, the regional leaders who were mandated to facilitate the consultations with the Ivorian parties on this key issue did not travel to Côte d'Ivoire before that date.

8. The absence of a new Prime Minister as the mandate of President Gbagbo came to an end on 30 October resulted in a situation of uncertainty and heightened tensions in the country. On 30 October, President Gbagbo delivered an address to the nation in which he stated that he would remain in power in view of the continued occupation of part of the country by the Forces nouvelles. He further explained that his decision was based on a ruling made by the Constitutional Council on 29 October. The opposition parties and the Forces nouvelles rejected this interpretation and decided to suspend their participation in the Council of Ministers. Both the opposition and the ruling party organized rallies in Abidjan to underscore their respective positions on the expiry of the President's mandate. The Forces

nouvelles also organized demonstrations in Bouaké and other areas in the north demanding that President Gbagbo step down.

9. In order to help calm the situation, I issued a statement on 29 October calling on the Ivorian parties to exercise restraint. Based on consultations with Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo, I explained in my statement that Prime Minister Seydou Diarra would remain in office until a new Prime Minister was appointed. I also appealed to the parties to cooperate with the international partners in implementing resolution 1633 (2005) in good faith.

10. The regional leaders subsequently held a series of consultations with the Ivorian parties on the appointment of a new Prime Minister. These consultations included a visit by President Obasanjo to Côte d'Ivoire on 4 November, during which the parties submitted a list of 16 candidates for the post, and a follow-up visit by Oluyemi Adeniji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, which yielded a short-list of four candidates. Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Tandja conducted further consultations with the parties in Abidjan on 22 November, but the parties did not reach agreement on a candidate acceptable to all. Presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo returned to Abidjan on 4 December for the final round of consultations, at the end of which they announced the appointment of Charles Konan Banny as the Prime Minister for the transition period.

11. Until his appointment, Mr. Banny was the Governor of the Central Bank for West African States. All Ivorian parties, including the Forces nouvelles and the ruling party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), welcomed his appointment. Shortly after the appointment was announced, former Prime Minister Seydou Diarra and the Government of National Reconciliation tendered their resignations. Mr. Banny was sworn into office on 7 December.

12. Following his appointment, the Prime Minister visited Niger, Nigeria and South Africa for consultations with the regional leaders. He also consulted extensively with all the Ivorian parties on the establishment of a new government, as well as with my Special Representative and members of the day-to-day Mediation Group on the next critical steps in the peace process. The formation of the new Government, which was announced on 28 December, paves the way for the implementation of the peace agreements.

13. As consultations on the appointment of the new Prime Minister were going on, the day-to-day Mediation Group and the International Working Group started to prepare the ground for the resumption of the implementation of outstanding tasks under the peace agreements. The Groups held their first meetings on 28 October and 8 November, respectively. Since then, the Mediation Group has held biweekly meetings, focused both on preparing for the meetings of the International Working Group and on defining practical modalities for monitoring the effective implementation of the road map.

14. At its inaugural meeting on 8 November, the International Working Group adopted its rules of procedure and discussed a draft road map for the new phase of the peace process based on resolution 1633 (2005). In the road map, new timelines for the expeditious implementation of the outstanding provisions of the peace agreement are proposed and key steps that should lead to the holding of free, fair and transparent elections are set out.

15. The Prime Minister attended the opening session of the second meeting of the International Working Group on 6 December, at which he pledged to focus, during his tenure, on rebuilding confidence among Ivorians and expressed his determination to move the peace process forward. In the communique issued at the end of the meeting, the Working Group assured the new Prime Minister of its full support and invited the Mediation Group to verify that he holds all powers and resources described in Security Council resolution 1633 (2005). With regard to the end of the mandate of the National Assembly on 16 December 2005, the International Working Group decided that, pending the convening of the Forum for National Dialogue envisaged in resolution 1633 (2005), all necessary legislation would be initiated by the Council of Ministers and submitted by the Prime Minister to the President for signature. The Mediation Group is pursuing consultations with the Ivorian parties on this issue, following calls for the mandate of the Assembly to be extended, which would be in contradiction of the recommendation of the Working Group.

16. At its 6 December meeting, the International Working Group further refined the draft road map for the implementation of the remaining aspects of the peace agreements, highlighting the key strategic areas and priorities for the transition period, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants; the disarmament and dismantling of militias; the redeployment of State administration; the identification process; elections; and the restoration of security throughout the country.

17. Preliminary estimates by the International Working Group, to be confirmed after consultations with the Prime Minister, indicate that the implementation of the road map would cost more than $280 million. The Mediation Group is expected to formally present the road map to the Prime Minister so that the transition government may take ownership of its implementation, with support from international partners.

18. Meanwhile, operational plans to address each of the above-mentioned priority areas are being developed. In this regard, detailed planning for the programme to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate some 48,000 combatants is ongoing. On 23 November, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) convened and participated in a meeting of experts on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration from the African Union, ECOWAS, the African Union Mediation, the Licorne forces and the World Bank to draw up a new schedule and develop modalities for the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme (see paras. 23 and 24 below). Similarly, the High Representative for the elections has been holding consultations on the outline of a plan for the electoral process, which is described in section IV below.

IV. Planning for the elections

19. The High Representative for the elections, Antonio Monteiro, has been consulting on the outline of an electoral schedule, which will form part of the road map for the overall peace process. On 30 November he presented a proposal on the outline to the Mediation Group. Under the proposal, the substantive work on the preparations for the elections was expected to commence by the end of December 2005, by which time the reconstituted Independent Electoral Commission was to

become fully operational. The development of the legal framework for the electoral operations, including the identification and registration of voters and the distribution of electoral identity cards, would begin once the Commission becomes fully operational and would be completed over a period of six months. The political campaigning by registered political parties and their candidates would take place during the three months before the elections in October 2006.

20. During this time, the Independent Electoral Commission has encountered internal problems, resulting in serious delays in the envisaged schedule. The reconstituted Independent Electoral Commission was sworn into office on 17 October, but it has not been able to function as some members are boycotting it, protesting the procedures followed when its bureau was elected on 19 October.

21. The Front Populaire Ivoirien, the ruling party, took the dispute to the Supreme Court, which, on 25 November, nullified the election of the Commission's bureau. The High Representative is consulting with the parties and the Prime Minister on ways of resolving the dispute. He has reported to the International Working Group, which, in its communiqué of 6 December, expressed its full support for his initiative and affirmed that, if necessary, his arbitration powers should be invoked to assist in the constitution of the bureau.

22. Meanwhile, in preparation for its support to the electoral process, UNOCI has deployed four electoral coordinators and 83 electoral advisers to 14 regional electoral offices throughout Côte d'Ivoire. The UNOCI Electoral Division is also developing a plan for supporting the Independent Electoral Commission once it becomes operational. The Division coordinates closely with the High Representative and extends technical advice to him. However, the office of the High Representative continues to face severe financial constraints. To date the trust fund established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the work of the High Representative has not received any contributions from donors. In this regard, I would like to draw the attention of the Council to my letter of 3 November (S/2005/707), in which I appealed to Council members to contribute to the funding of the office of the High Representative.

V. Planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

23. At the expert meeting on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, held on 8 November 2005, specific recommendations were made to the Mediation Group aimed at facilitating ownership of the revised disarmament, demobilization and reintegration timetable by the newly appointed Prime Minister and by ex-belligerent forces. Those recommendations include: (a) the need to update the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration timetable at the monthly meetings of the International Working Group; (b) the adoption of measures for an immediate commencement of pre-cantonment of combatants and the disarmament and dismantling of the militias as soon as possible, as called for by Security Council resolution 1633 (2005); (c) the creation of a task force to monitor and support the process of dismantling and disarmament of the militia groups; (d) the creation of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration team coordinated by UNOCI and comprising representatives of the African Union, ECOWAS, the African Union Mediation, the World Bank and the Licorne forces. This team would serve as a

forum for exchange of information and would facilitate the development of a concerted and integrated approach to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Côte d'Ivoire.

24. With regard to the financing of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the World Bank has confirmed its commitment to provide the Government of Côte d'Ivoire with a grant of $80 million, conditional, however, on the establishment of a system for receiving and disbursing the funds and the payment by the Government of $204 million in arrears.

VI. Security situation

25. During the period under review, the potential for violent disturbances remained very high throughout most of the country. Despite the semblance of calm following the appointment of the new Prime Minister, underlying tensions arising from a number of factors remained a source of deep concern. The main threats to security and stability throughout the country were: the combatants who are yet to disarm; ethnic and urban militias; extremist groups such as the Young Patriots; elements who feel disempowered by the post-October 2005 governance arrangements; the soaring crime rate; and continuing human rights abuses. There is a high risk of a major violent crisis and riots on the scale witnessed in Abidjan in November 2004. However, the overall assessment is that, despite persistent rumours of attacks, the probability of renewed direct conflict between the Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the Forces nouvelles remains relatively low, which could be attributed in part to the effective disengagement measures established by UNOCI and the Licorne forces.

26. The rampant insecurity in Abidjan is linked to the possibility of violent street demonstrations and mob violence, organized crime, extortion and racketeering activities. There are persistent reports about hidden weapons in the capital. The movement of United Nations staff and the impartial forces has become increasingly difficult in areas where there is a concentration of Young Patriots, especially in the areas of Yopougon, Abobo and Adjame in Abidjan, as well as in some parts of the west of the country. Incidents of organized crime reported during this period involving the use of automatic weapons were directed mainly against the business community, particularly foreigners, as well as UNOCI staff members.

27. UNOCI has also reported an increase in violent acts against opposition political party leaders and some members of the armed forces. The recently-established Centre de commandement des opérations de sécurité and other security agencies have reportedly been involved in extortion and racketeering activities. Individuals resisting their demands for money have often been subjected to serious violations of human rights, including physical violence and unlawful arrest.

28. In the western part of the country, widespread incidents of targeted ethnic killings, perpetrated mainly by militia groups, continued to be reported. The fear of violence by militia groups was particularly prevalent in communities around Duékoué, Guiglo and Bangolo. Land disputes in the west also remain a major source of tension and violence. UNOCI and the impartial forces have continued to encounter obstruction of access to areas dominated by militia groups and the Young

Patriots, such as Gagnoa, Divo and Lakota. Militia groups have also targeted UNOCI equipment for attack, notably in Gagnoa and San Pedro, and have incited anti-United Nations sentiments.

29. During the reporting period, no major violent incidents occurred in the areas along the borders with Guinea and Liberia. There are however persistent reports about ongoing recruitment of former combatants from Liberia both by pro-Government forces and military elements of the Forces nouvelles based in the western part of Côte d'Ivoire. While there were rumours of an impending attack by unidentified elements from Guinea, which prompted the Forces nouvelles to conduct training exercises and place their fighters on alert, the attacks did not materialize.

30. In the zone of confidence, UNOCI reported recurrent infiltrations by both Forces nouvelles elements and the national defence and security forces. Some of these combatants, including those from the Forces nouvelles, were involved in banditry and other criminal activities in the zone.

31. In Sector East, the situation remained generally quiet compared to the western part of the country, although UNOCI reported an increase in racketeering and violent criminal activities involving highway robbers, as well as minor infiltrations into the zone of confidence. Tensions also grew in the town of Brobo, just north of the zone, where the local population protested a decision putting the town under the control of the Forces nouvelles in September, requiring UNOCI's intervention. The mission further reported emerging rifts within both the FANCI and the Forces nouvelles, with the lower-level cadres turning against their leadership. In one incident, on 30 October, the Forces nouvelles commander of the military zone of Mankolo, in the north-west of the country, was severely beaten by his own troops who accused him of neglecting them.

VII. Deployment of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

A. Force deployment

32. As of 20 December 2005, UNOCI's troop strength stood at 6,891 out of the authorized strength of 7,090, including 200 military observers. The shortfall in the Mission's troop levels is due to the non-availability of a military aviation unit, whose deployment the Security Council approved in its resolution 1528 (2004). Efforts to find a Member State prepared to provide this critical unit are still ongoing.

33. Troops are deployed in two sectors, with sector headquarters in Bouaké and Daloa, respectively, with the force headquarters in Abidjan. Most troops are concentrated along both sides of the zone of confidence. Their main activities include: ensuring security of United Nations personnel and installations throughout the country; monitoring the zone to prevent hostilities and ceasefire violations; conducting robust patrols of their areas of deployment to prevent ethnic clashes or violence against the civilian population; establishing permanent liaison with FANCI and the Forces nouvelles to build confidence; monitoring international borders to prevent the movement of arms and combatants, as well as to monitor the movements of refugees; and providing security for personalities engaged in the peace process.

In addition, 200 military observers, deployed in 17 different sites, conducted systematic patrols to monitor the security situation throughout the country.

34. UNOCI troops and military observers also continued to enforce the arms embargo against Côte d'Ivoire, in keeping with Security Council resolution 1584 (2005). During the period under review, the Mission conducted 144 arms embargo inspections in areas both held by the Government and by the Forces nouvelles. The mission also monitored key airports and seaports for any illegal transportation of arms and equipment. No major violations of the embargo controls were recorded.

35. The additional battalion authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1609 (2005) arrived in the mission area in late September 2005. The battalion comprises 650 troops from Bangladesh, including a riverine unit, and 200 special forces from Jordan. The riverine unit is deployed in Abidjan to carry out search and rescue missions and to assist in the evacuation of United Nations personnel in the event of a crisis. Pending the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the rest of the Bangladeshi troops from this battalion are currently assigned to reinforce security in the areas around Yamoussoukro and to act as theatre reserve. One company is deployed in Abidjan to contribute to the security of United Nations personnel and installations. Once the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme begins, these troops will be redeployed to provide support for the implementation of the programme. The 200 special forces from Jordan are deployed in Abidjan where they carry out area domination operations and act as the mission's force reserve.

B. Police deployment

36. As of 20 December, the strength of the police component stood at 697, out of the authorized ceiling of 725, which includes 375 personnel of the three formed police units approved under Security Council resolution 1609 (2005). Difficulties continue to be encountered in recruiting the remaining francophone police officers required to perform specialist functions, in particular in the fields of training, ethics and discipline, reform and restructuring, criminal investigations, customs and border patrols and embargo monitoring.

37. Some 15 police officers, deployed at UNOCI headquarters in Abidjan, provide headquarters and administrative support to the teams deployed in the field. Another 39 police officers deployed in Abidjan have been providing training to 240 Ivorian gendarmes in such areas as community policing, human rights, forensics and traffic accident management.

38. Most UNOCI police officers are deployed in Sector East and Sector West where they provide basic training to 533 security auxiliaries recruited from the ranks of the Forces nouvelles and, south of the zone of confidence, monitor police activities and mentor Ivorian police officers. UNOCI has deployed civilian police officers to six additional sites, in Danane, Seguela, Ferkessedougou, Katiola, Bouna and Beoumi, to monitor police activities and provide mentoring for the newly trained security auxiliaries assigned to work in these areas.

39. The mission's three formed police units (two from Jordan, which arrived in the mission area on 5 and 22 August, and one from Bangladesh, which arrived on 9 October 2005) are deployed in Abidjan, Daloa and Bouaké to protect United

Nations personnel and assets. They carry out routine patrolling along with the United Nations police officers, escort United Nations personnel travelling to sensitive areas, respond to emergency or distress calls by United Nations personnel and provide security protection at United Nations installations.

C. Sous-Groupement de Sécurité

40. In keeping with Security Council resolution 1528 (2004), the 206 United Nations personnel of the Sous-Groupement de Sécurité are deployed in Abidjan to provide security, in coordination with the Ivorian authorities, for the ministers of the Government of National Reconciliation and the signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

41. In view of the tense security situation in Abidjan, UNOCI continues to receive further requests for close protection by the Sous-Groupement de Sécurité, including from representatives of international stakeholders in the peace process. During most of the reporting period, demands on UNOCI increased to the point that the Sous-Groupement was providing close and residence protection to 39 dignitaries, which is over its capacity. This figure will be reviewed now that the new government has been formed.

VIII. Review of the strength of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

42. In its decision of 6 October 2005, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union requested the United Nations Security Council to consider increasing UNOCI's strength substantially. The Security Council, in paragraph 22 of its resolution 1633 (2005), took note of this request and expressed its intention to review the troop levels of UNOCI at the end of the Mission's mandate on 24 January 2006. In this connection, the Secretariat sent a technical team to UNOCI in November 2005 to assess the Mission's troop and police strength, taking into account the new circumstances emanating from Security Council resolution 1633 (2005).

43. The technical team noted that, given the steady deterioration of the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire following the Government's air raids on Forces nouvelles positions and the subsequent violent disturbances in Abidjan in November 2004, I had recommended, in my third, fourth and fifth progress reports on UNOCI, that the Council should strengthen the mission by two additional battalions. One of these battalions was to reinforce the security arrangements in Abidjan while the other was to support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities. Through its resolution 1609 (2005), the Security Council approved only the deployment of the latter battalion, as mentioned in paragraph 35 above.

44. The technical team conducted a troop-to-task assessment, which confirmed that UNOCI troops are thinly stretched throughout the country. In this regard, it will be recalled that during the disturbances of November 2005, the Mission had to redeploy three infantry companies from their parent battalions in the sectors to reinforce the security arrangements in Abidjan. These companies have remained in Abidjan, leaving the affected parent battalions severely depleted. The battalions

have the capacity to patrol only the main population centres and monitor the principal entry and exit points to the zone of confidence.

45. The troop-to-task assessment further found that in Abidjan the six infantry companies drawn from different contingents, as explained above, are also overstretched. They provide area security, armed escorts to convoys, protection around some 10 United Nations locations throughout the city and United Nations air assets and conduct arms embargo inspections. The newly arrived Jordanian special forces company serves as the mission's force reserve, which was assessed as small for a mission the size of UNOCI. The United Nations integrated security contingency plan for Abidjan also requires that, in the event of major security disturbances, the six infantry companies secure zones around 10 assembly areas and four concentration points, as well as the resupply and evacuation routes.

46. The technical team looked into the implications of the new circumstances arising from Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) for the operations of UNOCI. In this regard, it noted that the resolution stipulates that the concomitant implementation of the outstanding tasks from the peace agreements, including the identification process, the cantonment of forces, the disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation of combatants and the dismantling and disarmament of militias, would expedite the creation of conditions for holding free, fair, open and transparent elections. UNOCI's initial planning, prior to the adoption of resolution 1633 (2005), had provided for the sequential implementation of these critical tasks. This would have allowed UNOCI to redeploy its troops, once one task was completed, to meet the requirements for the implementation of subsequent successive tasks. The troop-to-task assessment ascertained that the concurrent implementation of these tasks would create a serious surge in the military, police and civilian support personnel required on the ground, which would be very difficult, if not impossible, to manage within existing resources.

47. The technical team also discussed with UNOCI possible measures to rationalize the current configuration of troops. In this regard, it concluded that the structure of the Mission's signals company could be adjusted by combining its logistic support with that of other units. This would reduce the strength of the company by 40 per cent. The team, noting that the continued lack of a military aviation unit severely hampers the mission's operational effectiveness, suggested adjusting the required capabilities of the unit, which may make it possible to identify a Member State prepared to provide such a unit.

Recommendations

A. Military strength

48. In the light of the above findings, it is recommended that UNOCI's troop strength be increased by four battalions (3,400 troops), with the commensurate increase in civilian staffing to support this deployment. Firstly, the mission still needs the additional battalion requested in my previous reports, particularly in light of the volatile security situation and the possibility that another major violent crisis might occur. This battalion would relieve the infantry companies redeployed to reinforce security in Abidjan in November 2004. Secondly, the implementation of the road map developed by the International Working Group of the African Union on the basis of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) requires an additional three

battalions. As explained in paragraph 45 above, these three battalions would provide a secure environment for the concomitant implementation of the remaining tasks under the peace agreements. It should be noted that, in developing its recommendations, the technical team ascertained that no additional support to UNOCI can be expected from the Licorne forces beyond the current arrangements, especially in the event of a violent crisis.

49. The technical team explored several options for generating the proposed additional troops, including the arrangements envisaged under Security Council resolution 1609 (2005), which authorized the temporary redeployment of troops from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to strengthen UNOCI. The team travelled to UNMIL to study the feasibility of this option. Following detailed discussions, both the team and UNMIL concluded that, in the event of a crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, a short notice reinforcement of UNOCI from UNMIL would not be feasible, primarily due to the long time it would take to obtain the consent of the concerned troop-contributing countries and to prepare the troops for redeployment. Moreover, the only force element in UNMIL capable of reacting with sufficient speed is the Mission's reserve, known as the Quick Reaction Force. This force comprises a joint Irish/Swedish battalion and UNMIL has already earmarked it to backstop the guard force deployed at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

50. The study also determined that reinforcement from UNMIL for pre-planned tasks, for instance to provide a secure environment for the identification process, voter registration and the elections, may be possible, subject to the consent of the concerned troop-contributing countries. In this regard, it is recommended that one of the proposed four additional battalions would be redeployed from UNMIL for a limited period of time. This battalion and two others would be deployed as required, only for the duration of the pre-planned tasks that would be implemented simultaneously as explained above. Consequently, they would be repatriated as the surge requirements decrease and as the removal of the zone of confidence frees more troops for redeployment to perform other tasks after the completion of the disarmament and demobilization of combatants. It is worth noting however that UNMIL emphasized that the proposed temporary redeployment of any of its troops to reinforce UNOCI should not occur before March 2006 due to the uncertain political and security situation in Liberia.

51. It is also recommended that the structure of the mission's signals company be adjusted along the lines explained in paragraph 47 above. In addition, the Secretariat will adjust the initially stipulated capabilities of the required aviation unit, in the hope that troop-contributing countries would find it easier to provide a unit with lesser capabilities.

B. Police strength

52. With regard to the UNOCI police component, it is recommended that three additional formed police units (375 officers) and 100 civilian police officers be deployed to the mission immediately. The latter would mentor the 533 security auxiliaries trained by the United Nations police and observe the police situation in the areas currently controlled by the Forces nouvelles. The security auxiliaries will be deployed to 54 locations in the northern part of the country, which have been left without any law enforcement presence following the displacement of some 4,000 police and gendarmes by the conflict. There are currently 110 United Nations

police officers deployed in this area and in the zone of confidence. The additional 100 officers would be deployed along those already assigned to the north, bringing the total strength of police officers in this area to 210, thus ensuring effective mentoring.

53. One of the three additional formed police units would be deployed in Abidjan to strengthen the Mission's non-lethal capacity to respond to threats to United Nations personnel and the sites where United Nations offices are located. The other two would be deployed to Sector West and Sector East. UNOCI has to deploy personnel to more sites in the two sectors to support the concomitant implementation of the remaining tasks under the peace agreements. In order to provide adequate security protection at these sites and for the movement of United Nations personnel as they carry out their work, these new formed police units, based in Yamassoukro and Daloa, would also reinforce security coverage of the volatile western region of the country where the militia groups are very active.

IX. Humanitarian situation

54. During the period under review, the humanitarian community, with logistical support from UNOCI, facilitated the voluntary return of some 2,000 internally displaced persons from Duékoué to their areas of origin in the zone of confidence. The return process has been particularly successful in the village of Fengolo, in the western part of the zone, to which more than 1,000 internally displaced persons have returned. Humanitarian organizations, UNOCI and the impartial forces have launched joint efforts to rebuild social cohesion and support community development in this area.

55. Reports of spontaneous return of internally displaced persons in other parts of the western region demonstrate that security conditions have somewhat improved. However, due to the uncertain security situation and inadequate services in the areas of return, some families have returned from their villages to the town of Duékoué. Continued provision of basic services and improved security conditions are essential to ensure the sustainability of the process of returning internally displaced persons, in particular in rural areas.

56. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resumed support for the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees following the completion of the electoral process in Liberia. As of 6 December, UNHCR has assisted the return of 12,796 refugees to Liberia. An estimated 19,500 refugees have returned on their own.

57. With regard to education, the Government is yet to assume its responsibility for organizing national school examinations in the Forces nouvelles-controlled areas, which were postponed several times in September and October 2005. UNOCI has strongly condemned the politicization of the issue of national examinations as a violation of children's rights and international humanitarian law.

58. Between 11 and 14 November 2005, the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), carried out a fourth round of polio vaccinations, immunizing five million children under the age of five. As a result of these and earlier campaigns,

there has been a significant improvement in the prevention of poliomyelitis and measles and the coverage rate for vaccinations in the country has increased.

X. Economic and social situation

59. As noted in my last report, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Côte d'Ivoire is estimated to have increased by 1.6 per cent in 2004. For 2005, the forecast is for a modest increase of a maximum of 1 per cent over the figures for 2004. This is largely due to the faltering peace process, the volatile security situation and the lack of external support. Coffee and cocoa production continued to decline by an estimated 20 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively, during the first nine months of 2005, compared to the same period in 2004. However, gas production has increased by 13 per cent compared to 2004. Meanwhile, a 3 per cent increase in the rate of inflation is predicted at the end of 2005.

60. In addition, the budget deficit has increased by about $18.5 million as a result of the continuing use of deficit financing to bear the cost of war-related activities. Public sector investment fell by more than 50 per cent in 2005. Notwithstanding the ongoing discussions with the Bretton Woods institutions, Côte d'Ivoire continues to be in non-accrual status vis-à-vis the World Bank and the conclusion of a post-conflict programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) remain conditional, inter alia, on the implementation of a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the restoration of public administration and security. This situation may jeopardize the financing of key components of the road map, such as the disarmament programme, as mentioned in paragraph 24 above.

XI. Human rights

61. Despite the tension prevailing in the country, no widespread inter-ethnic confrontations or attacks were recorded during the reporting period. However, UNOCI received reports of serious human rights violations, many of which were politically or ethnically motivated. These were perpetrated by armed and unarmed militia on both sides of the Ivorian conflict. UNOCI continued to issue public reports on the human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The third such report was issued on 13 October 2005. It described incidents of egregious human rights violations and the reluctance of the authorities on either side of the zone of confidence to conduct criminal investigations into cases brought to their attention.

62. UNOCI held several meetings with senior military and civilian officials throughout Côte d'Ivoire to discuss the deplorable human rights situation and to urge them to take the necessary steps to end impunity for human rights violations. In collaboration with local non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights and with funding from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNOCI initiated a programme to strengthen the capacity of national human rights groups to raise human rights awareness among the population. The mission also supported these groups and the Government in organizing events to mark the International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2005.

63. My Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide visited Côte d'Ivoire from 29 November to 3 December 2005. In his report, which was shared with the Security Council, he expressed concern about reports of serious and massive violations of human rights targeting civilians based on their ethnicity, religion and/or national origin. In this regard, he noted that tensions in the country and the mobilization of ethnic group identities for political ends could lead to further serious human rights violations. He urged all national actors openly to agree to a code of conduct that would include a commitment to refrain from fuelling intercommunal tensions and expressed strong support for the urgent strengthening of UNOCI's forces, which would increase the mission's capacity to provide a minimum of protection to civilians.

XII. Gender

64. UNOCI's gender-mainstreaming activities continued to focus on strengthening local capacity, induction training for new personnel and gender training for UNOCI staff and 533 Forces nouvelles recruits who are to be involved in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The mission also undertook sensitization activities with regard to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the resolution. The UNOCI Gender Unit also participated in training on sexual exploitation and abuse issues to include a gender perspective focusing on the social and economic impact of the conflict on women and girls in Côte d'Ivoire.

XIII. HIV/AIDS

65. UNOCI continued to mainstream HIV/AIDS issues into the mission's activities and to implement outreach projects with the collaboration of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in order to reduce the risk of peacekeepers contracting or of spreading HIV. Risk reduction activities included HIV/AIDS awareness sessions, the training of 144 additional peer educators, voluntary confidential counselling and testing of awareness, as well as focus group surveys on HIV/AIDS within battalions and civilian personnel. UNOCI has also developed a strong working and technical relationship with the Ministry for the Fight against AIDS, networks of non-governmental organizations and other international organizations.

XIV. Child protection

66. In cooperation with UNICEF, UNOCI has made considerable progress in mainstreaming children's concerns into the mission's activities, including through the training of peacekeepers and the provision of guidance on violations listed in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) to all heads of sections and units, including the military components. UNOCI's continued partnership with UNICEF and other agencies focused on the establishment of a viable monitoring and reporting mechanism in application of resolution 1612 (2005). With regard to the demobilization of child soldiers, the Forces nouvelles submitted an action plan to the United Nations agreeing to end the use of child soldiers, in compliance with Security Council resolution 1539 (2004).

67. Meanwhile, the dialogue continues with identified militia groups to end the use of child soldiers in areas under the control of the Government. Four pro-government militia groups in the west (Guiglo) have so far submitted a list of 150 children for demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration and UNICEF and a national non-governmental organization (Afrique Secours Assistance) have signed an agreement to demobilize and reintegrate 200 children in Guiglo. An effective end to the use of child soldiers by pro-government militia groups depends on the ability to identify these groups, which in turn requires the full involvement and support of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire.

XV. Personnel conduct and discipline

68. Maintaining the discipline of personnel in the mission area continues to be a priority for my Special Representative. The recently created Conduct and Discipline Team in the mission is now in place to continue to receive allegations of misconduct by personnel. The team cooperates with the Office for Internal Oversight Services in the investigation of all Category 1 misconduct matters. Currently, sexual exploitation and abuse-related investigations have been completed at mission level, and proceedings are ongoing against 15 military officers and several contingent members.

XVI. Financial implications

69. By its resolutions 59/16 B of 22 June 2005 and 60/17 of 23 November 2005, the General Assembly appropriated a total amount of $418.8 million for the maintenance of UNOCI for the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006.

70. Financial resources approved by the General Assembly for UNOCI provide for the increased military and United Nations police strength of 7,090 military personnel and up to 725 police personnel, including three formed police units, authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 1609 (2005).

71. Should the Security Council decide to increase the military and police strength of UNOCI as recommended in paragraphs 48 to 53 above, I shall seek additional resources for the mission from the General Assembly. Financial implications arising from the proposed increase will be submitted to the Council in a subsequent addendum to the present report, to be submitted shortly.

72. As at 30 November 2005, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNOCI amounted to $109.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,988.3 million.

73. As at 30 November 2005, amounts owed to the UNOCI troop and formed police contributors totalled $16.1 million. Reimbursement of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 30 September 2005 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

XVII. Observations

74. The 6 October 2005 decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, followed by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) and the efforts of the regional leaders played a crucial role in preventing a dangerous political and security crisis that was anticipated at the end of President Gbagbo's mandate on 30 October. These decisions have given the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire a new lease on life. The Ivorian parties must seize this unique opportunity and implement the decision of the African Union and Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) fully and in earnest.

75. In this regard, I warmly welcome the appointment of Charles Konan Banny as Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire for the transition period and the formation of his Government. These are, however, only the first steps towards implementing the resolution. The challenges ahead are formidable and urgent. Much time has been lost and the situation brooks no further delays. All Ivorian parties must therefore extend full and unconditional cooperation to the Prime Minister and his Government and move expeditiously to start the process of implementing the outstanding tasks under the peace agreements, including the disarmament programme; the dismantling and disarmament of militias; the redeployment of State administration; the identification of nationals; the registration of voters; and the organization of free, fair, open and transparent elections.

76. The International Working Group and the Mediation Group established by the African Union have already taken highly commendable and timely steps to develop a draft road map for the transition period. I urge the Prime Minister to work with the two groups and to finalize the road map expeditiously. It is also essential to convene, as soon as possible, the Forum for National Dialogue, as proposed in the decision of the African Union. The primary objective of that forum must be to unite all the national stakeholders behind the Prime Minister and the International Working Group, in order to ensure the full implementation of the outstanding tasks.

77. I am deeply concerned about the artificially created dispute within the Independent Electoral Commission, which has impeded its effective functioning. Political bickering by the members of the Commission and those behind them will not only cause delays in the electoral process, but could also seriously undermine the credibility of this important body. I call upon the political parties to work with the Prime Minister and the High Representative for the elections in resolving this dispute. In this regard, I fully support the view of the International Working Group that, if need be, the High Representative should invoke his arbitration authority to decisively settle the matter.

78. The dangerous confrontation over the mandate of the National Assembly, which expired on 16 December, and the unjustifiable attempts to prolong the mandate in defiance of the decision of the International Working Group are very disturbing. The interim arrangement decided upon by the Working Group, under which legislation should be initiated by the Council of Ministers and signed by the President, pending further consultations with the Ivorian parties, including the Forum for National Dialogue, is consistent with Security Council resolution 1633 (2005) and must be respected by all parties.

79. The effective implementation of the road map for the transition period requires that the Ivorian parties fully comply with their obligations under the various peace

agreements. In particular, apart from implementing the remaining tasks in good faith, they must respect the human rights of the Ivorian people, guarantee the freedom of movement of the impartial forces throughout the country and play their role in creating an enabling environment for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections.

80. In this regard, the parties should be reminded that the Mediation Group, the International Working Group and the Security Council will be carefully monitoring and reporting on all cases of obstruction of the overall peace process, including incitement to hatred and violence, human rights violations, obstruction of the freedom of movement of the impartial forces and violations of the arms embargo. I also urge the Security Council to consider imposing targeted measures against individuals and groups who may be cited by the Working Group in this regard. The political leaders should put the national reconciliation and peace process above their short-term considerations; history will judge harshly those who do otherwise.

81. In order to address the volatile security situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the accompanying human rights violations, and to ensure effective and dynamic support for the implementation of its 6 October decision, which was endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1633 (2005), the Peace and Security Council of the African Union requested the United Nations Security Council to consider reinforcing UNOCI's strength. In this regard, the technical team sent to UNOCI by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in November 2005 confirmed the need to strengthen the mission as explained in section VII of the present report. I therefore urge the Security Council to approve the recommendations contained in paragraphs 48 to 53 above. The Security Council's strong political determination to move the Ivorian peace process forward, as expressed in its resolution 1633 (2005), must be matched by a commensurate reinforcement of UNOCI so that the goals the Council set in that resolution can be met. In this regard, it is also worth noting that a number of the key tasks that UNOCI is mandated to support are expected to start in the very beginning of 2006. It is therefore important for the Council to consider these recommendations expeditiously. I also recommend that the mission's mandate be extended for a period of 12 months, until 24 January 2007, to adequately cover the post-election period.

82. The effective implementation of the road map drawn up by the International Working Group, especially the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the electoral process, will require financial support from the international community. Member States are expected to contribute generously towards funding for these key components of the peace process. I am also very concerned about the lack of funding for the office of the High Representative for the elections and urge the Security Council and the General Assembly to consider authorizing funding the office from assessed contributions.

83. The encouraging developments in Côte d'Ivoire during the reporting period would not have been possible without the untiring efforts of the regional leaders, in particular Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Tandja. I am very grateful to them for these efforts, which complement the work of the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire. I would also like to express my deep appreciation for the invaluable support that the Licorne forces continue to extend to UNOCI.

84. In conclusion, I would like to commend my Special Representative, Pierre Schori, and the civilian and military staff of UNOCI for their determined efforts in

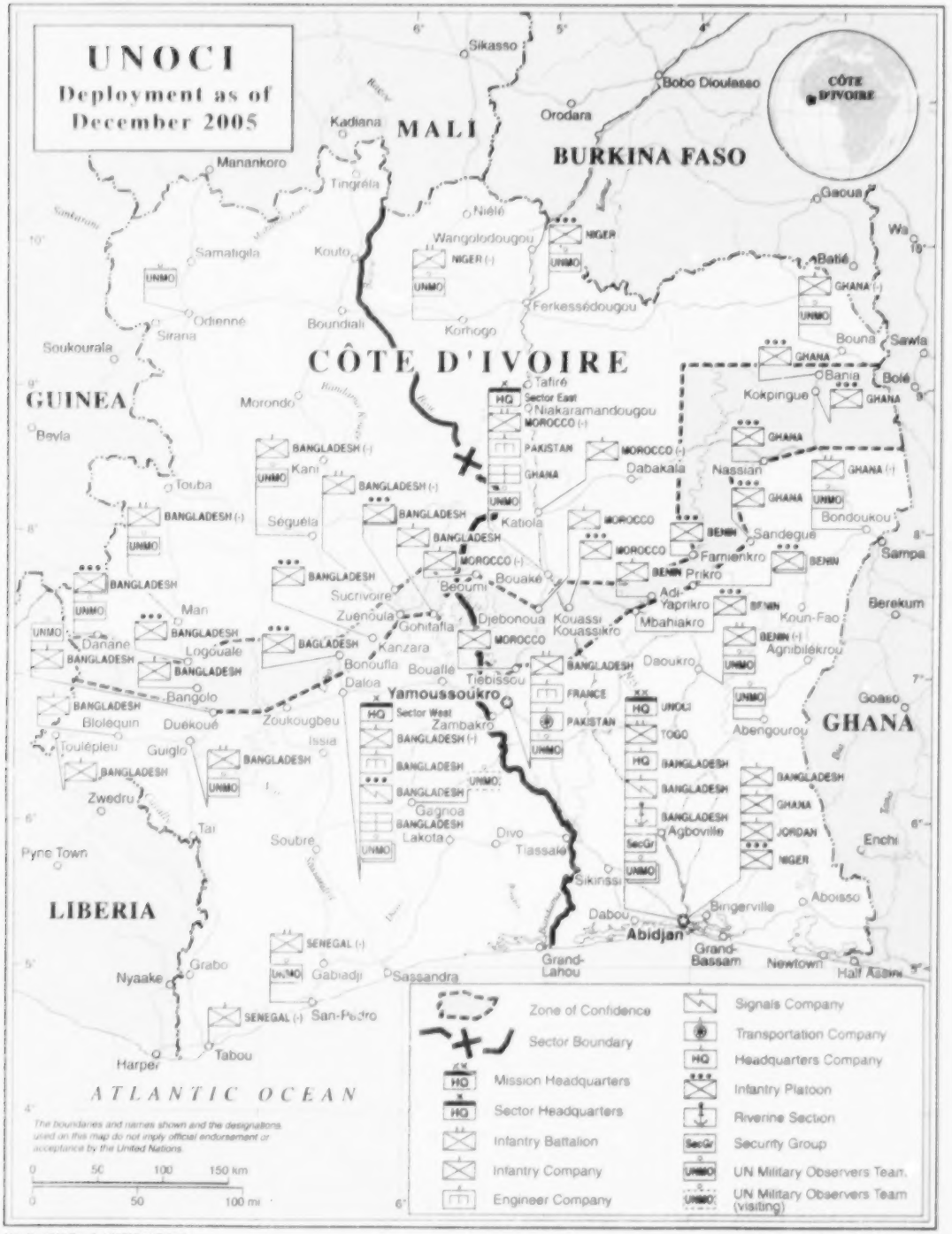
support of the search for sustainable peace in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the High Representative for the elections, Antonio Monteiro. Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations country team, humanitarian and development organizations and bilateral donors, as well as the countries that are contributing troops and police personnel to the mission, and to the African Union and ECOWAS for their contribution to the peace process.

Annex

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire: military and police strength as at 13 December 2005

Country	Military component				Police
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total	
Argentina					3
Bangladesh	10	9	3 473	3 492	135
Benin	9	7	304	320	27
Bolivia	3			3	
Brazil	5	3		8	
Central African Republic					3
Cameroon					53
Canada					9
Chad	3			3	6
China	7			7	
Congo	5			5	
Croatia	3			3	
Djibouti					40
Dominican Republic	4			4	
Ecuador	2			2	
El Salvador	3			3	1
France	2	15	171	188	10
Guatemala	5			5	
Ghana	6	6	397	409	1
Gambia	5	1		6	
Guinea	4			4	
India	8			8	11
Ireland	2			2	
Jordan	7	10	199	216	252
Kenya	5	4		9	
Madagascar					2
Morocco	1	2	730	733	
Namibia	3			3	
Nepal	3			3	
Niger	6	3	364	373	34
Nigeria	5			5	17
Pakistan	10	10	364	384	
Paraguay	9	2		11	
Peru	3			3	

Country	Military observers	Military component			Police
		Staff officers	Troops	Total	
Poland	2			2	
Philippines	4	1		5	11
Republic of Moldova	4			4	
Romania	5			5	
Russian Federation	11			11	
Senegal	8	10	313	331	42
Serbia	3			3	
Sri Lanka					1
Togo	6	4	292	302	1
Tunisia	2	1		3	
Turkey					23
Uruguay	2	1		3	9
Uganda	2	2		4	
Vanuatu					4
Yemen	5			5	2
Zambia	1			1	
Total	**193**	**91**	**6 607**	**6 891**	**697**



Map No. 4220 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
December 2005

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

United Nations S/2006/3

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 January 2006

Original: English

Letter dated 3 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit the attached press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea on 2 January 2006 regarding the peace process on the Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Araya **Desta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-20073 (E) 050106

Annex to the letter dated 3 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

PRESS RELEASE

Enduring Peace is Predicated on Expeditious Demarcation

For almost four years now, the Ethiopian regime has flouted international law to occupy sovereign territories of a UN member State in violation of the UN Charter and the Algiers Peace Agreement. The fact is Ethiopia continues to reject the Award of the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) through alternating and deceitful pretexts of "acceptance in principle", the occurrence of parallel "dialogue" and other subterfuges.

As it will be recalled, the Claims Commission ("EECC") has recently announced its fourth substantive decision. The Claims Commission is the second body tasked by the Algiers Agreement with determining compensation for violations of international humanitarian law by either party during the 1998-2000 border war. Over the past few years, the Claims Commission has found Ethiopia's army and security forces liable for ethnic cleansing of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean descent; looting and burning Eritrean villages to the ground; rape and abduction of Eritrean civilians; detonation of Eritrean hospitals and other civilian infrastructure; widespread malicious slaughter of livestock; detonation of archeological monuments; ransacking of the Eritrean Embassy Residence in Addis Ababa; desecration and destruction of Eritrean veteran cemeteries; and psychological torture of Eritrean POWs.

The Claims Commission has also resolved in this fourth Award to hold Eritrea liable for the events of 12 May 1998. Eritrea presented substantial evidence to the contrary, arguing in its written and oral pleadings that Ethiopia's aggression in July 1997 and 6-12 May 1998 – which resulted in substantial loss of Eritrean life – were the proximate cause of the war's beginning. Despite its strong disagreement with the Commission's conclusion, Eritrea remains committed to honoring the Award, on the

grounds of respect for international arbitral decisions and the international rule of law.

The Claims Commission has said that it will determine in a second damages phase what remedy, if any, is appropriate in light of this new Award. It has already intimated that compensation must be restrictively determined, in light of the fact that after the first few days of the war, Ethiopia was equally responsible for its continuation. It must be noted that the Claims Commission has not requested the Security Council to involve itself in enforcing this or its other Awards. Indeed, there is no reason that it should, unless one of the parties ceases to respect them.

As we have underscored all along, where the Security Council has failed to exercise its moral and legal responsibilities is in regard to Ethiopia's rejection of the final and binding Award of the Boundary Commission. This inexcusable abdication of responsibility only condones the violation of the rule of law while eroding the integrity of arbitration processes. It will not, certainly, promote the maintenance of regional peace and security, which is the central mandate of the Security Council, but potentially sow the seeds of tension and instability in our region.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Asmera,
2 January 2006

United Nations

S/2006/4

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 January 2006

Original: English

Letter dated 3 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as the representative of the current Chairman of the African Union, I have the honour to forward herewith a communiqué on the situation in the Central African Republic, adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council at its 44th meeting, held in Addis Ababa on 29 December 2005 (see annex I).

Please also find enclosed a brief on the security situation in the Central African Republic and the visit of an African Union mission to the region (see annex II).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Aminu Bashir **Wali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations
Representative of the current Chairman of the African Union

06-20320 (E) 120106

Annex I to the letter dated 3 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English and French]

COMMUNIQUE OF THE 44TH MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 44th meeting held on 29 December 2005, adopted the following decision on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR):

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the Report [PSC/PR/2 (XLIV)] submitted by the Commission on the security situation in the Central African Republic and the visit to the Region, from 25 October to 8 November 2005, by an AU Mission, as well as the additional information given to it;

2. **Expresses concern** about the persistence of insecurity in the North of CAR and the resulting displacement of people towards the South of Chad;

3. **Commends** the UNHCR and the NGOs present on the field for the assistance given to the Central African refugees in Chad and **stresses** the need to mobilise increased resources to enable the humanitarian agencies increase their assistance to the affected people;

4. **Expresses satisfaction** at the efforts made by the countries of the region and the Multinational Force of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (FOMUC), as well as by the United Nations, through the UN Office in Central African Republic (BONUCA), to address the insecurity and contribute to the establishment of the necessary conditions for the socio-economic recovery of the CAR and the consolidation of peace and stability in that country. Council **pays tribute** to the countries of the region and **encourages** them to continue to support the efforts of the Central African Government by maintaining the presence of FOMUC for the necessary duration, in order to restore security and stability. Council **expresses its support** to the efforts of the concerned neighbouring countries in addressing cross-border insecurity;

5. **Appeals** to the Member States and the Partners of the AU to provide FOMUC with the necessary means to strengthen its capacity and facilitate the smooth execution of its mandate, to contribute to the restructuring of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), including the rehabilitation and building of the necessary infrastructures, and to support the concerned neighbouring countries in their efforts to address transboundary insecurity. To that end, Council **requests** the Commission, in close cooperation with the Executive Secretariat of CEMAC and the United Nations, to contribute to the sensitisation of the international community and to actively involve itself in the on-going initiatives of the neighbouring countries to address the prevailing insecurity;

6. **Reiterates** its appeal to all the bilateral and multilateral partners of the CAR and to the Member States to provide to the CAR all the necessary economic and financial assistance, including direct budgetary support, taking into account the particularly difficult situation in the CAR. In that regard, Council **encourages** the Chairperson of the Commission, in collaboration with the relevant institutions, including the African Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), to send a multi-disciplinary mission of experts to assess the situation and make recommendations on the assistance which the Member States and the AU could give to the CAR, within the framework of a comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction programme, covering both socio-economic and security aspects as well as other matters. In this respect, Council **stresses** the important role that could be played by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC).

7. **Requests** the Sub-Committee on Refugees of the Permanent Representative's Committee (PRC) to examine the situation of the Central African refugees in Chad and to take the appropriate steps in order to provide assistance, in coordination with the relevant institutions, in particular the UNHCR. Council **appeals** to the international community to respond generously to the United Nations Consolidated Appeal for 2006 for humanitarian and recovery activities in CAR;

8. **Decides** to remain seized of the matter.

Annex II to the letter dated 3 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English and French]

BRIEF ON THE SECURITY SITUATION IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR) AND THE VISIT OF AN AU MISSION TO THE REGION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Following information that the security situation in the north of the Central African Republic (CAR) has deteriorated, with people moving massively towards Southern Chad, the Chairperson of the Commission dispatched a fact-finding mission to the CAR, Chad and Cameroon, to collect reliable information on the events taking place in those areas and to examine with the authorities of the countries concerned the efforts being deployed to address the situation and how best the AU could support these efforts.

2. The Mission, which stayed in the region from 25 October to 8 November 2005, was led by Ambassador Pierre Yère, Senior Political Officer in the AU Office in Kinshasa, and comprised civilian and military officers of the Commission. The Mission collected information through discussions with civilian and military officials of the Governments of the three countries mentioned above, the United Nations agencies and NGOs working in the region, as well as directly with refugees. Some of the interlocutors provided documentary evidence.

3. In Bangui (CAR), the Mission held discussions with the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Francophonie, the Minister of Internal Affairs in charge of Public Security, the Minister of Finance and Budget, the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, the Chief of Staff and the Commander of the CEMAC Multinational Force (FOMUC).

4. In Chad, the Mission held working sessions with the Minister of Defence, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Ambassadors of France and the United States and the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and Coordinator of the United Nations System. Accompanied by the representative of UNHCR in Chad, the delegation travelled to the south, where it visited the refugee camps of Yaroungou and Amboko in the Prefectures of Maro and Goré, respectively. The Mission met with officials of UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs, as well as with refugees.

5. In Yaounde, the Mission was received by the Director of the Criminal Investigation Department, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense, the Director of Territorial Organization in the Ministry of Territorial Administration, the Director-General of Foreign Research and the Representative of the UNHCR.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

6. After the coup d'Etat of 15 March 2003 which brought General François Bozizé to power, the CAR went through a 27-month period of transition during which a new electoral code, as well as several other legislations related to the

organization of elections were adopted. A new Constitution was also adopted by referendum on 5 December 2004. Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in March and May 2005. General Bozizé was elected after the second round and the coalition of parties that supported him won majority seats in Parliament.

7. In order to assess the situation following the elections and in the aftermath the establishment of the new State institutions, I sent my Special Envoy, Sadok Fayala, to Bangui and N'djamena from 15 to 22 June 2005. At its 33rd meeting held on 24 June 2005, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) decided to lift the suspension imposed on the CAR following the coup d'Etat of 15 March 2003.

8. The fact-finding mission to the CAR was therefore undertaken at a time when the constitutional rule had been re-established. This new situation made it possible to improve the political climate and renewed hope to see stability and economic recovery return to the country. However, the security situation suddenly deteriorated in early June 2005, just before the swearing in of General Bozize on 11 June 2005. The volatile security situation then compelled many people, in the North, estimated between 12 000 and 15 000, to leave their villages to seek refuge in Southern Chad in addition to the 30,000 who fled to Chad to escape atrocities following the 2003 rebellion.

III. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

A. The security situation

9. It emerged from the various discussions the delegation had in the CAR, Chad and Cameroon, that the Prefectures of the CAR most affected by the instability are those closest to the country's borders with Cameroon and Chad. This instability is described generally as the work of unidentified armed groups, poachers and highway bandits. Some of the bandits took farmers' children hostage for huge ransoms. The various interlocutors seem to make a distinction between highway bandits driven by easy gain who attack and loot travelers, herdsmen and villages, and heavily armed groups, often in military uniforms who, in addition to committing atrocities and robbery, supposedly have political demands and enlist people by force.

10. At the border with Cameroon, the main targets of the attacks are the Bororo herdsmen who are traditionally found on both sides of the border of the two countries. These Bororo herdsmen from Central African Republic left their traditional rearing areas with their herds and crossed into Cameroon, without however constituting refugee camps.

11. The most serious problems arise along the CAR border with Chad, where five armed attacks against communities have been reported since June 2005. Weapons of war were used to carry out these attacks by groups bent on terrorizing the civilians who regard them as supporters of former President Ange-Felix Patassé.

12. While the authorities of the CAR claim that the attacks are mainly the work of highway robbers, other persons interviewed by the Mission blamed them emphatically on armed groups made up of former members of the security unit of former President Ange-Felix Patassé and the demobilized soldiers of General Bozizé, called ex-liberators, who are disgruntled about the meager gratuity they were paid after General Bozizé came to power.

13. According to the UNHCR Representative in Bangui, the insecurity is also caused by the trespassing and destructive migratory movement across farmlands by the Chadian herdsmen, who do not keep to the traditional routes reserved for cattle crossing. Unable to control these armed herdsmen, the CAR farmers witness the destruction of their farms and agricultural production, a situation which impoverishes them and forces them to migrate.

14. By way of resolving the increasing security problem, the Government of the CAR deployed units of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) to the affected areas. However, an assessment of the situation revealed that the number of the troops deployed is insufficient to cope with the magnitude of the problem. The soldiers sent are also ill equipped and unmotivated. These inadequacies are occasionally made up for by the limited support of soldiers from the Chadian army. France has also promised to provide the Government with air facilities to cope with the problem of insecurity.

15. Cameroon has also deployed troops along its border with the CAR to prevent incursions into its territory, and FOMUC has deployed units to Bozoum and Bria, in addition to its security outfit in Bangui.

16. At regional level, Chad, Cameroon and the CAR held a meeting from 25 to 26 August 2005, in Yaoundé, on cross-border security under the auspices of the United Nations Office in the CAR (BONUCA). The meeting examined the causes of the cross-border insecurity, its forms and the impact on the people of the three countries.

17. The meeting proposed the following measures to address the situation: careful deployment of units along high-risk highways and areas; strengthening the capacity of the defence and security forces on the ground (number of men, transport facilities, signals and information), involving the local administrative and traditional authorities in informing and creating awareness among the people, intensifying information exchange on security, notifying one another before carrying out planned operations in the border areas, with the possibility of

exchanging liaison officers, using air facilities for observation, and reviving the Joint Commissions. The meeting also recommended that contact between such border authorities as the administrative staff, the defence forces and security officials should be enhanced, that the exchange of signals and information should be intensified, and that joint patrols and operations should be mounted to regularly assess the security situation at the borders.

18. Medium and long term measures envisaged include obtaining assistance from international and regional organizations such as the UN, the AU, the EU, ECCAS, CEMAC and CEN-SAD, in the form of financial, logistical and operations (signals and air reconnaissance facilities) assistance, and providing military or civilian expertise in specific areas to be identified.

19. The meeting recommended that a Tripartite Commission should be set up for the implementation of and follow-up on the planned measures. The Commission should be made up of defence and security officials, as well as the local administrative authorities. Its mission should be to consider the security situation and identify financial, human and material resources to be mobilized.

20. Following the Tripartite Meeting, Chad and Cameroon held a bilateral meeting in Bertoua from 17 to 20 October 2005. Another such bilateral meeting is schedule to be held between Cameroon and the CAR.

B. The Humanitarian Situation

21. With logistical support from the UNHCR Office in Chad, the AU Mission was able to visit two refugee camps.

22. The Yaroungou Camp (Maro Sub-Prefecture, Department of Grand Sido): This camp, which is located near the border with the CAR, is host to about 15, 000 refugees from the CAR who arrive in 2003. The tarpaulin shelters provided by UNHCR in this camp are gradually being replaced with non-stabilized earth bricks, which give the camp the appearance of an ordinary Chadian village. As 90 percent of the refugees in this camp are farmers, they practice subsistence farming to supplement the food supplies provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). Furthermore, the camp has a health centre, a school, several boreholes and wells and a market. The refugees live in a stable environment, but are concerned about the irregular distribution of food by WFP and the prospect of that support coming to an end.

23. The Amboko Camp (Goré Prefecture): This camp plays host to refugees who arrived since 2003 (about 16, 000) and those who joined them as from June 2005. They are estimated to be between 12, 000 and 15,000. It is located near the CAR town of Markounda, which came under armed attacks on 27 September 2005. The camp has almost reached saturation point, and therefore, UNHCR,

with the consent of the Chadian authorities, plans to set up a new camp in Gonjé, which should be able to host about 15 000 persons.

24. The UNHCR manages the two camps and protects the refugees in collaboration with the Chadian authorities and NGOs. In both camps operate NGOs such as African Concern, Africare, Coopi, the Doctors Without Borders (Netherlands), GTZ, and the Red Cross of Chad. WFP provides food supplies, while the NGOs deal with issues related to environment, education, health, water supply, food distribution, household goods, etc. The requirements in terms of food, shelter and household goods have increased far beyond the UNHCR reserves as a result of the new influx of refugees. Apart from taking care of the newly arrived, the refugees of Amboko said they needed agricultural implements, seeds and inputs.

25. However, UNHCR is finding it difficult to obtain all the necessary resources to fully meet the needs of the refugees whose number is constantly increasing. Appeals to the international community have not received the necessary response. Under the circumstances, the visit of the AU Mission raised some hope.

C. Economic and social situation

26. The resolution of the security, humanitarian and social problems referred to earlier should be viewed within the context of the serious economic and financial crisis facing the CAR for more than a decade now. This crisis has affected the foundations of the economy, led to the dilapidation of the country's infrastructure, reduced the Government's ability to fully carry out its functions and weakened the entire institutions of State. As a result, the new authorities that emerged from the elections only had a short period of respite.

27. The negotiations initiated with the international financial institutions in January 2004 have made it possible to conclude agreements and achieve the expected results. However, the IMF approved a loan of $US 8.2 million for the country in June 2004 under its post-conflict emergency assistance programme. This loan is subject to terms and conditions such as reduction of the wage bill, combating corruption and adequate mobilization of local resources.

28. At the end of a joint evaluation mission in July 2005, the IMF and the World Bank noted an increase in the wage bill and a decrease in revenues. Another mission by the two institutions, in September 2005, made it possible for the Government of the Central African Republic and the IMF to agree on a programme that could qualify for post-conflict emergency assistance. The joint World Bank/IMF mission also noted a slight recovery of economic activity and welcomed the measures taken to manage public finances and the wage bill.

29. CEMAC, China, the EU and France have also provided financial aid to the CAR, but this ad hoc assistance did not enable the Government to solve the cash-flow problems on a long term basis. This situation led to accumulation of the salaries of civil servants, with attendant social and economic problems. Furthermore, the state of the economy did not make it possible for the Government to deploy sufficient troops in the North to deal with the insecurity The Government of the Central African Republic has high hopes in the assistance from the international community. In this connection, it would like the AU to intercede on its behalf with the donors, so that the country's case can be examined with greater attention and flexibility.

IV. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The Mission was unable to clearly establish that the insecurity which persists in the north of the CAR is the result of a budding rebellion. At the same time, it should be noted that many soldiers faithful to former President Ange-Félix Patassé might be among the perpetrators of the armed activities carried out it in the affected areas. Moreover, the "ex-liberators" who felt let down by President Bozizé could also be part of any operation aimed at destabilizing his Government.

31. Be that as it may, the professional nature of the operations in the ground carried out using sentries and routes for retreat and evacuation of the wounded, indicates that the perpetrators could be more than just bandits and highway robbers. Deserters from the Chadian army could also be found in the areas affected by the insecurity. The current modus operandi of the armed groups who are on foot gives the impression that they might be recruiting people to launch future major operations. Faced with such a situation, the 380 men making up FOMUC would be an insignificant force.

32. In view of the foregoing, greater efforts are needed to restore security, including strengthening FOMUC. Any initiative to be taken in this regard should be within the regional context. For its part, the Commission intends to intensify its consultations with the countries of the region with a view to exploring possible ways and means of helping the CAR to overcome its current difficulties. This help could take the form of expertise to be sought from Member States.

33. The present situation of the 40 000 refugees from the Central African Republic living in Southern Chad calls for urgent action on the part of the International community. I make an urge to Member States and the International Community to provide the necessary assistance to the populations concerned and to Chad. In this regard, the AU Commission for Refugees should mount a vigorous sensitization campaign.

34. Beyond these short-term actions, the challenges to the addressed in the CAR are economic and financial. The success of security and political measures put in place to permanently remove insecurity will depend on the resolution of financial and economic issues. Indeed, effective economic and financial assistance should make it possible to reduce social tension, motivate the defense and security forces, resume various development projects, revive economic activities and restore hope to the entire population. Within this context, and pursuant to the provisions of the PSC Protocol on post-conflict reconstruction, I intend to dispatch a team of experts to the CAR to assess the socio-economic situation and recommend concrete actions that the AU and its Member States could take to help consolidate the significant inroads made to restore peace and stability.

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Agenda item 14
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Identical letters dated 4 January 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I transmit to you herewith a detailed statistical table showing the number of Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty which occurred during December 2005, i.e., a total of 96 violations (see annex).

These violations are in contravention of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 1614 (2005), and go against the Secretary-General's repeated calls for their cessation, most recently in his report S/2005/460 of 20 July 2005. Lebanon counts on the United Nations to compel Israel to desist from those violations, which constitute a threat to international peace and security, and holds Israel responsible for any consequences to which those acts may give rise.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 14 and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim **Assaf**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

06-20170 (E) 050106 050106

Annex to the identical letters dated 4 January 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statistical table showing Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty during December 2005

Air violations				*Sea violations*	*Land violations*			*Total violations*
					Military acts of aggression	*Field violations*	*Breaches*	
Military jet	Reconnaissance	Helicopter	Total	Crossing of territorial waters, artillery fire and shooting of flares and firebombs over territorial waters	Air raids, artillery shelling, shelling of military positions and important posts, attacks on and killing of civilians	Gunfire, shooting of flares, dropping of artillery missiles, infiltration and crossing of international borders	Threats and displaying of weapons, bulldozing of soil, placing of barbed wire and setting up of installations inside Lebanese territory	
22	24	8	54	16	3	18	5	96

United Nations S/2006/6

Security Council

Distr.: General
6 January 2006

Original: English

Identical letters dated 4 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I enclose herewith a letter from the Syrian Government concerning the Israeli plan to divide the Syrian occupied village of al-Ghajar (see annex), which constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-20241 (E) 060106 060106

Annex to the identical letters dated 4 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Syrian Arab Republic
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1. The Syrian Government has received various complaints from inhabitants of the occupied Syrian village of al-Ghajar stating that, for several weeks now, the Israeli occupation army has been engaged in intimidating and harassing the village population with the aim of dividing the village by erecting a boundary fence to bisect it in accordance with the United Nations Blue Line demarcated in 2000. Israel is to transfer all villagers living north of the Blue Line to the southern part of the village and then build a security wall on the Blue Line, ultimately separating the southern and northern parts of the village so that its northern part is with Lebanon and its southern part is under Israeli occupation.

2. Following the recent events which occurred in the village of al-Ghajar, the inhabitants of the village were informed last week by the occupation forces that they had to evacuate the northern part of the village by the end of March 2006, meaning the transfer of 90 per cent of the villagers to the southern part. If the villagers fail to evacuate, the village is to be sealed off by the occupation forces and the villagers forbidden to go beyond the wall surrounding the village.

3. Coinciding with these events and in furtherance of the plan to divide the village, a hearing took place in the Israeli High Court in Jerusalem in which the public prosecution requested the following:

(a) A ban on the entry of all vehicles to the village of al-Ghajar, including even those belonging to inhabitants, with permission for the latter to enter Lebanon only on foot;

(b) The issuance of an order for inhabitants to relocate to the southern part of the village, meaning that there is no other option before them. The Israeli prosecution holds that its soldiers shall not be exposed to risk for the sake of people residing in the northern part of the village.

4. Israel's division of the village and transfer of civilian population away from its land will lead to the confiscation of a 900-dunum area belonging to villagers and to the situation of that area outside the wall which Israel is intending to erect, consequently altering the demography of the village. Israel's operation to force civilians to relocate to the southern part of the village also constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of civilian population under occupation. Furthermore, this act constitutes a crime against humanity under the Statute of the International Criminal Court; article 7 provides that the act of "deportation or forcible transfer of population" constitutes a crime against humanity which is punishable by and within the jurisdiction of the Court.

5. The village of al-Ghajar is a Syrian village occupied in 1967 by Israel. The inhabitants of the village are Syrian Arab citizens, most of whom hold Syrian identity cards and were living there before 1967. Title deeds moreover specify that the village and its lands belong to the Syrian governorate of Quneitra. The operation to divide the village is therefore such as to alter its demography.

6. In compliance with international law and international humanitarian law, the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the international community to assume its responsibility in exerting pressure on Israel in order to compel it to stop this crime and to prevent the village of al-Ghajar from being unilaterally divided in a manner counter to international legitimacy, as well as to end the human, social and economic suffering of the inhabitants of the village, since it is depriving them of their homes, land and livelihoods, severing close ties and separating the village population and individual families.

7. The Syrian Arab Republic also reserves its right to call for the adoption of such measures as are necessary to prevent Israel from dividing the occupied Syrian village of al-Ghajar.